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# FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20426

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CHAIRMAN HOECKER ANNOUNCES ACCELERATED PROCEEDINGS BEFORE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES**

Chairman James J. Hoecker announced today that Commission staff has developed new timelines in order to reach faster decisions on proceedings set for hearing before the Commission's Administrative Law Judges (ALJs). On average, the time to litigate many cases would be reduced by as much as one-third.

The new procedural time standards differ based on the complexity of the proceeding and include a separate schedule of time frames for complaints.

Commented Chairman Hoecker: "I can think of no better indicator of our increased commitment to serving our 'customers' well than for staff to offer to complete its work in a predictable time frame. I expect substantial time savings in many cases. Today, we make a public commitment to speed up the processing of cases set for hearing. The deadlines I announce were in fact devised by those offices that participate for the Commission in the hearing process. The Office of Administrative Law Judges and the Office of Administrative Litigation are to be commended for committing themselves to the new timetables."

For simple proceedings set for hearing, other than complaints, a hearing date will be set within 19.5 weeks. Reply briefs will be due within 25.5 weeks, and an initial decision will be issued within 29.5 weeks.

For complex proceedings, excluding complaints, a hearing date will be set within 32 weeks, reply briefs will be due within 40 weeks, and an initial decision within 47 weeks.

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For exceptionally complex proceedings, excluding complaints, a hearing date will be set within 42 weeks, with reply briefs due within 53 weeks, and an initial decision within 63 weeks.

Merger cases set for hearing will be processed within these timelines consistent with the Commission's merger policy which states that it will be able to issue a final order on most applications within 12 to 15 months from the date a complete application is filed.

All time frames date from the time a presiding judge is designated by the chief judge.

The new processing deadlines for complaints are consistent with the processing commitments made by the Commission in its Final Rule in Docket No. RM98-13-000. For "fast-track" complaints, a hearing date will be set within three days, oral argument in lieu of briefs will be due within five days, and an initial decision will be issued within eight days. For other complaints before an ALJ, a hearing date will be set within 30 days, reply briefs will be due within 45 days, and an initial decision will be issued within 60 days. Complaint time frames date from the time a Commission order is issued.

The expedited schedules announced today will be applied to new cases and any pending cases that have not yet had a procedural schedule set by the presiding judge.

The new time schedules are available on the Commission's website at [www.ferc.fed.us](http://www.ferc.fed.us) under "What's New."

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